

General Assembly

Raised Bill No. 128

February Session, 2022

LCO No. 970



Referred to Committee on PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Introduced by: (PD)

## AN ACT CONCERNING FORECLOSURE, ASSIGNMENT AND OTHER ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS FOR UNPAID SEWER ASSESSMENTS AND OTHER FEES AND CHARGES.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

- 1 Section 1. Section 7-254 of the 2022 supplement to the general statutes
- 2 is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (Effective
- 3 October 1, 2022, and applicable to actions filed on or after October 1, 2022):
- 4 (a) Any assessment of benefits or any installment thereof, not paid
- 5 within thirty days after the due date, shall be delinquent and shall be
- 6 subject to interest from such due date at the interest rate and in the
- 7 manner provided by the general statutes for delinquent property taxes.
- 8 Each addition of interest shall be collectible as a part of such assessment.
- 9 (b) (1) Whenever any installment of an assessment becomes
- delinquent, the interest on such delinquent installment shall be as
- 11 provided in subsection (a) of this section or five dollars, whichever is
- 12 greater. Any unpaid assessment and any interest due thereon shall
- 13 constitute a lien upon the real estate against which the assessment was
- 14 levied from the date of such levy. Each such lien may be continued,

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- recorded and released in the manner provided by the general statutes
- 16 for continuing, recording and releasing property tax liens. Each such
- 17 lien shall take precedence over all other liens and encumbrances except
- taxes and may be enforced, in accordance with subdivision (2) of this
- 19 <u>subsection</u>, in the same manner as property tax liens. The tax collector
- 20 of the municipality may collect such assessments in accordance with any
- 21 mandatory provision of the general statutes for the collection of
- 22 property taxes and the municipality may recover any such assessment
- 23 in a civil action against any person liable therefor.

- (2) In the case of one or more liens for any unpaid assessment and any interest due thereon, as described in subdivision (1) of this subsection, upon any owner-occupied real estate, no such lien or liens may be enforced unless the principal for all such liens upon such owner-occupied real estate exceeds ten thousand dollars.
- (c) [Any] (1) Except as provided in subdivision (2) of this subsection, any municipality, by resolution of its legislative body, may assign, for consideration, any and all liens filed by the tax collector to secure unpaid sewer assessments as provided under the provisions of this chapter. The consideration received by the municipality shall be negotiated between the municipality and the assignee.
- (2) In the case of one or more liens filed by the tax collector to secure unpaid assessments, as described in subdivision (1) of this subsection, upon any owner-occupied real estate, no such lien or liens may be assigned unless the principal for all such liens upon such owner-occupied real estate exceeds ten thousand dollars.
- (d) The assignee or assignees of such liens shall have and possess the same powers and rights at law or in equity as such municipality and municipality's tax collector would have had if the lien had not been assigned with regard to the precedence and priority of such lien, the accrual of interest and the fees and expenses of collection, except that any such assignee (1) shall not be insulated from liability by virtue of the provisions of section 42-110c, and (2) shall be obligated to provide a

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payoff statement, as defined in section 49-8a, in the same manner as a mortgagee in accordance with the requirements of section 49-10a. The assignee shall have the same rights to enforce such liens as any private party holding a lien on real property, including, but not limited to, foreclosure and a suit on the debt.

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(e) No such assignment executed on or after July 1, 2022, shall be valid or enforceable unless memorialized in a contract executed by the authority and the assignee that is in writing and provides: (1) The manner in which the assignee will provide to the owner of the real property that is the subject of the assignment one or more addresses and telephone numbers that may be used for correspondence with the assignee about the debt and payment thereof; (2) the earliest and latest dates by which the assignee shall commence any foreclosure or suit on the debt or the manner for determining such dates, except as may be impacted by any payment arrangement, bankruptcy petition or other circumstance, provided in no event shall the assignee commence a foreclosure suit before one year has elapsed since the assignee's purchase of the lien; (3) the structure and rates of attorney's fees that the assignee may claim against the owner or owners of such real property in any foreclosure, suit on the debt or otherwise, and a prohibition from using as foreclosure counsel any attorney or law office that is owned by, employs or contracts with any person having an interest in such assignee; (4) confirmation that the owner of the real property for which the lien has been filed shall be a third-party beneficiary entitled to enforce the covenants and responsibilities of the assignee as contained in the contract; (5) a prohibition on the assignee assigning the lien without the municipality's prior written consent; (6) the detail and frequency of reports provided to the municipality's tax collector regarding the status of the assigned liens; (7) confirmation that the assignee is not ineligible, pursuant to section 31-57b, to be assigned the lien because of occupational safety and health law violations; (8) disclosure of (A) all resolved and pending arbitrations and litigation matters in which the assignee or any of its principals have been involved within the last ten years, except foreclosure actions involving liens

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purchased from or assigned by governmental entities, (B) all criminal proceedings that the assignee or any of its principals has ever been the subject, (C) any interest in the subject property held by the assignee or any of its principals, officers or agents, and (D) each instance in which the assignee or any of its principals was found to have violated any state or local ethics law, regulation, ordinance, code, policy or standard, or to have committed any other offense arising out of the submission of proposals or bids or the performance of work on public contract; and (9) such additional terms to which the municipality and the assignee mutually agree, consistent with applicable law.

(f) The assignee, or any subsequent assignee, shall provide written notice of an assignment, not later than sixty days after the date of such assignment, to the owner and any holder of a mortgage on the real property that is the subject of the assignment, provided such owner or holder is of record as of the date of such assignment. Such notice shall include information sufficient to identify (1) the property that is subject to the lien and in which the holder has an interest, (2) the name and addresses of the assignee, and (3) the amount of unpaid taxes, interest and fees being assigned relative to the subject property as of the date of the assignment.

(g) Not less than sixty days prior to commencing an action to foreclose a lien under this section, the assignee shall provide a written notice, by first-class mail, to the holders of all first or second security interests on the property subject to the lien that were recorded before the date the assessment of the lien sought to be enforced became delinquent. Such notice shall set forth: (1) The amount of unpaid debt owed to the assignee as of the date of the notice; (2) the amount of any attorney's fees and costs incurred by the assignee in the enforcement of the lien as of the date of the notice; (3) a statement of the assignee's intention to foreclose the lien if the amounts set forth pursuant to subdivisions (1) and (2) of this subsection are not paid to the assignee on or before sixty days after the date on which the notice is provided; (4) the assignee's contact information, including, but not limited to, the assignee's name, mailing address, telephone number and electronic mail

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- address, if any; and (5) instructions concerning the acceptable means of making a payment on the amounts owed to the assignee as set forth pursuant to subdivisions (1) and (2) of this subsection. Any notice required under this subsection shall be effective upon the date such
- 119 notice is provided.

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- (h) When providing the written notice required under subsection (g) of this section, the assignee may rely on the last recorded security interest of record in identifying the name and mailing address of the holder of such interest, unless the holder of such interest is the plaintiff in an action pending in Superior Court to enforce such interest, in which case the assignee shall provide the written notice to the attorney appearing on behalf of the plaintiff.
  - (i) Each aspect of a foreclosure, sale or other disposition under this section, including, but not limited to, the costs, attorney fees, method, advertising, time, date, place and terms, shall be commercially reasonable.
- Sec. 2. Section 7-258 of the 2022 supplement to the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October* 1, 2022, and applicable to actions filed on or after October 1, 2022):
  - (a) (1) Any charge for connection with or for the use of a sewerage system, not paid within thirty days of the due date, shall thereupon be delinquent and shall bear interest from the due date at the rate and in the manner provided by the general statutes for delinquent property taxes. Each addition of interest shall be collectible as a part of such connection or use charge. Any such unpaid connection or use charge shall constitute a lien upon the real estate against which such charge was levied from the date it became delinquent. Each such lien may be continued, recorded and released in the manner provided by the general statutes for continuing, recording and releasing property tax liens. Each such lien shall take precedence over all other liens and encumbrances except taxes and may be foreclosed in the same manner as a lien for property taxes in accordance with subdivision (2) of this subsection. The

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municipality may by ordinance designate the tax collector or any other person as collector of sewerage system connection and use charges and such collector of sewerage system connection and use charges may collect such charges in accordance with the provisions of the general statutes for the collection of property taxes. The municipality may recover any such charges in a civil action against any person liable therefor. For the purpose of establishing or revising such connection or use charges and for the purpose of collecting such charges any municipality may enter into agreements with any water company or municipal water department furnishing water in such municipality for the purchase from such water company or municipal water department of information or services and such agreement may designate such water company or municipal water department as a billing or collecting agent of the collector of sewerage system connection and use charges in the municipality. Any water company or municipal water department may enter into and fulfill any such agreements and may utilize for the collection of such charges any of the methods utilized by it for the collection of its water charges.

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(2) In the case of one or more liens for any unpaid connection or use charge, as described in subdivision (1) of this subsection, upon any owner-occupied real estate, no such lien or liens may be foreclosed unless the principal for all such liens upon such owner-occupied real estate exceeds ten thousand dollars.

(b) [Any] (1) Except as provided in subdivision (2) of this subsection, any municipality, by resolution of its legislative body, may assign, for consideration, any and all liens filed by the tax collector or collector of sewerage system connection and use charges to secure unpaid sewerage connection and use charges as provided under the provisions of this chapter. The consideration received by the municipality shall be negotiated between the municipality and the assignee.

(2) In the case of one or more liens filed by the tax collector or collector of sewerage system connection and use charges to secure unpaid sewerage connection and use charges, as described in subdivision (1) of

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this subsection, upon any owner-occupied real estate, no such lien or liens may be assigned unless the principal for all such liens upon such owner-occupied real estate exceeds ten thousand dollars.

- (c) The assignee or assignees of such liens shall have and possess the same powers and rights at law or in equity as such municipality and municipality's tax collector would have had if the lien had not been assigned with regard to the precedence and priority of such lien, the accrual of interest and the fees and expenses of collection, except that any such assignee (1) shall not be insulated from liability for its conduct by virtue of the provisions of section 42-110c, and (2) shall be obligated to provide a payoff statement, as defined in section 49-8a, in the same manner as a mortgagee in accordance with the requirements of section 49-10a. The assignee shall have the same rights to enforce such liens as any private party holding a lien on real property, including, but not limited to, foreclosure and a suit on the debt.
- (d) No such assignment executed on or after July 1, 2022, shall be valid or enforceable unless memorialized in a contract executed by the authority and the assignee that is in writing and provides: (1) The manner in which the assignee will provide to the owner of the real property that is the subject of the assignment one or more addresses and telephone numbers that may be used for correspondence with the assignee about the debt and payment thereof; (2) the earliest and latest dates by which the assignee shall commence any foreclosure or suit on the debt or the manner for determining such dates, except as may be impacted by any payment arrangement, bankruptcy petition or other circumstance, provided in no event shall the assignee commence a foreclosure suit before one year has elapsed since the assignee's purchase of the lien; (3) the structure and rates of attorney's fees that the assignee may claim against the owner or owners of such real property in any foreclosure, suit on the debt or otherwise, and a prohibition from using as foreclosure counsel any attorney or law office that is owned by, employs or contracts with any person having an interest in such assignee; (4) confirmation that the owner of the real property for which the lien has been filed shall be a third-party beneficiary entitled to

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enforce the covenants and responsibilities of the assignee as contained in the contract; (5) a prohibition on the assignee assigning the lien without the municipality's prior written consent; (6) the detail and frequency of reports provided to the municipality's tax collector regarding the status of the assigned liens; (7) confirmation that the assignee is not ineligible, pursuant to section 31-57b, to be assigned the lien because of occupational safety and health law violations; (8) disclosure of (A) all resolved and pending arbitrations and litigation matters in which the assignee or any of its principals have been involved within the last ten years, except foreclosure actions involving liens purchased from or assigned by governmental entities, (B) all criminal proceedings that the assignee or any of its principals has ever been the subject, (C) any interest in the subject property held by the assignee or any of its principals, officers or agents, and (D) each instance in which the assignee or any of its principals was found to have violated any state or local ethics law, regulation, ordinance, code, policy or standard, or to have committed any other offense arising out of the submission of proposals or bids or the performance of work on public contract; and (9) such additional terms to which the municipality and the assignee mutually agree consistent with applicable law.

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(e) The assignee, or any subsequent assignee, shall provide written notice of an assignment, not later than sixty days after the date of such assignment, to the owner and any holder of a mortgage on the real property that is the subject of the assignment, provided such owner or holder is of record as of the date of such assignment. Such notice shall include information sufficient to identify (1) the property that is subject to the lien and in which the holder has an interest, (2) the name and addresses of the assignee, and (3) the amount of unpaid taxes, interest and fees being assigned relative to the subject property as of the date of the assignment.

(f) Not less than sixty days prior to commencing an action to foreclose a lien under this section, the assignee shall provide a written notice, by first-class mail, to the holders of all first or second security interests on the property subject to the lien that were recorded before the date the

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248 assessment of the lien sought to be enforced became delinquent. Such 249 notice shall set forth: (1) The amount of unpaid debt owed to the 250 assignee as of the date of the notice; (2) the amount of any attorney's fees 251 and costs incurred by the assignee in the enforcement of the lien as of 252 the date of the notice; (3) a statement of the assignee's intention to 253 foreclose the lien if the amounts set forth pursuant to subdivisions (1) 254 and (2) of this subsection are not paid to the assignee on or before sixty 255 days after the date the notice is provided; (4) the assignee's contact 256 information, including, but not limited to, the assignee's name, mailing 257 address, telephone number and electronic mail address, if any; and (5) 258 instructions concerning the acceptable means of making a payment on 259 the amounts owed to the assignee as set forth pursuant to subdivisions 260 (1) and (2) of this subsection. Any notice required under this subsection 261 shall be effective upon the date such notice is provided.

(g) When providing the written notice required under subsection (f) of this section, the assignee may rely on the last recorded security interest of record in identifying the name and mailing address of the holder of such interest, unless the holder of such interest is the plaintiff in an action pending in Superior Court to enforce such interest, in which case the assignee shall provide the written notice to the attorney appearing on behalf of the plaintiff.

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- (h) Each aspect of a foreclosure, sale or other disposition under this section, including, but not limited to, the costs, attorney fees, method, advertising, time, date, place and terms, shall be commercially reasonable.
- Sec. 3. Section 22a-506 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2022, and applicable to actions filed on or after October 1, 2022*):
  - (a) An authority may (1) levy and collect benefit assessments upon the lands and buildings within its jurisdiction that, in its judgment, are especially benefited by a wastewater system; (2) establish, revise and collect rates, fees, charges, penalties and assessments for the use and

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benefits of a wastewater system; and (3) order the owner of any building which is accessible to a wastewater system to connect to such system, all in the manner provided in sections 7-249 to 7-257, inclusive, and sections 22a-416 to 22a-599, inclusive.

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(b) (1) Any assessment of benefits, including any installment thereof, and any charge, fee, fine or other amount that is not paid within thirty days after the due date shall be delinquent, shall be subject to interest and shall constitute a lien upon the premises served and a charge upon the owner thereof all in the manner provided both by the provisions of the general statutes for delinquent property taxes and by section 7-258, as amended by this act. The rules and regulations of the authority may provide for the discontinuance of water pollution control service for nonpayment of taxes, special assessments, fees, rates, penalties or other charges therefor imposed under sections 22a-500 to 22a-519, inclusive. Such lien shall take precedence over all other liens or encumbrances except taxes and may be foreclosed against the lot or building served, in accordance with subdivision (2) of this subsection, in the same manner as a lien for taxes, provided all such liens shall continue until such time as they shall be discharged or foreclosed by the authority without the necessity of filing certificates of continuation, but in no event for longer than ten years. The authority may institute a civil action against such owner to recover the amount of any such fee or charge which remains due and unpaid for thirty days along with interest thereon at the same rate as unpaid taxes and with reasonable attorneys' fees, provided no such civil action to recover such amount may be instituted against the owner of an owner-occupied premises unless the principal for such amount exceeds ten thousand dollars.

(2) In the case of one or more liens for any assessment of benefits and any charge, fee, fine or other amount that is not paid within thirty days after the due date, as described in subdivision (1) of this subsection, upon any owner-occupied premises served, no such lien or liens may be foreclosed unless the principal for all such liens upon such owner-occupied premises served exceeds ten thousand dollars.

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Sec. 4. Section 49-920 of the 2022 supplement to the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2022, and applicable to actions filed on or after October 1, 2022*):

- (a) [Any] (1) Except as provided in subdivision (2) of this subsection, any regional sewer authority established under an act of the General Assembly, may assign, for consideration, any and all liens filed by such regional sewer authority to secure unpaid sewer assessments or connection or use charges of the authority. The consideration received by the authority shall be negotiated between the authority and the assignee.
- (2) In the case of one or more liens filed by a regional sewer authority to secure unpaid sewer assessment or connection or use charges of the authority, as described in subdivision (1) of this subsection, upon any owner-occupied real estate, no such lien or liens may be assigned unless the principal for all such liens upon such owner-occupied real estate exceeds ten thousand dollars.
  - (b) The assignee or assignees of such liens shall have and possess the same powers and rights at law or in equity as such authority would have had if the lien had not been assigned with regard to the precedence and priority of such lien, the accrual of interest and the fees and expenses of collection, except that any such assignee (1) shall not be insulated from liability by section 42-110c, and (2) shall be obligated to provide a payoff statement, as defined in section 49-8a, in the same manner as a mortgagee in accordance with the requirements of section 49-10a. The assignee shall have the same rights to enforce such liens as any private party holding a lien on real property, including, but not limited to, foreclosure and a suit on the debt.
  - (c) No such assignment executed on or after July 1, 2022, shall be valid or enforceable unless memorialized in a contract executed by the authority and the assignee that is in writing and provides: (1) The manner in which the assignee will provide to the owner of the real property that is the subject of the assignment one or more addresses and

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telephone numbers that may be used for correspondence with the assignee about the debt and payment thereof; (2) the earliest and latest dates by which the assignee shall commence any foreclosure or suit on the debt or the manner for determining such dates, except as may be impacted by any payment arrangement, bankruptcy petition or other circumstance, provided in no event shall the assignee commence a foreclosure suit before one year has elapsed since the assignee's purchase of the lien; (3) the structure and rates of attorney's fees that the assignee may claim against the owner or owners of such real property in any foreclosure, suit on the debt or otherwise, and a prohibition from using as foreclosure counsel any attorney or law office that is owned by, employs or contracts with any person having an interest in such assignee; (4) confirmation that the owner of the real property for which the lien has been filed shall be a third-party beneficiary entitled to enforce the covenants and responsibilities of the assignee as contained in the contract; (5) a prohibition on the assignee assigning the lien without the municipality's prior written consent; (6) the detail and frequency of reports provided to the municipality's tax collector regarding the status of the assigned liens; (7) confirmation that the assignee is not ineligible, pursuant to section 31-57b, to be assigned the lien because of occupational safety and health law violations; (8) disclosure of (A) all resolved and pending arbitrations and litigation matters in which the assignee or any of its principals have been involved within the last ten years, except foreclosure actions involving liens purchased from or assigned by governmental entities, (B) all criminal proceedings that the assignee or any of its principals has ever been the subject, (C) any interest in the subject property held by the assignee or any of its principals, officers or agents, and (D) each instance in which the assignee or any of its principals was found to have violated any state or local ethics law, regulation, ordinance, code, policy or standard, or to have committed any other offense arising out of the submission of proposals or bids or the performance of work on public contract; and (9) such additional terms to which the municipality and the assignee mutually agree consistent with applicable law.

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(d) The assignee, or any subsequent assignee, shall provide written notice of an assignment, not later than sixty days after the date of such assignment, to the owner and any holder of a mortgage on the real property that is the subject of the assignment, provided such owner or holder is of record as of the date of such assignment. Such notice shall include information sufficient to identify (1) the property that is subject to the lien and in which the holder has an interest, (2) the name and addresses of the assignee, and (3) the amount of unpaid taxes, interest and fees being assigned relative to the subject property as of the date of the assignment.

- (e) Not less than sixty days prior to commencing an action to foreclose a lien assigned under this section, the assignee shall provide a written notice, by first-class mail to the holders of all first or second security interests on the property subject to the lien that were recorded before the date the assessment of such lien became delinquent. Such notice shall set forth: (1) The amount of unpaid debt owed to the assignee as of the date of the notice; (2) the amount of any attorney's fees and costs incurred by the assignee in the enforcement of the lien as of the date of the notice; (3) a statement of the assignee's intention to foreclose the lien if the amounts set forth pursuant to subdivisions (1) and (2) of this subsection are not paid to the assignee on or before sixty days after the date the notice is provided; (4) the assignee's contact information, including, but not limited to, the assignee's name, mailing address, telephone number and electronic mail address, if any; and (5) instructions concerning the acceptable means of making a payment on the amounts owed to the assignee as set forth pursuant to subdivisions (1) and (2) of this subsection. Any notice required under this subsection shall be effective upon the date such notice is provided.
- (f) When providing the written notice required under subsection (e) of this section, the assignee may rely on the last recorded security interest of record in identifying the name and mailing address of the holder of such interest, unless the holder of such interest is the plaintiff in an action pending in Superior Court to enforce such interest, in which case the assignee shall provide the written notice to the attorney

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appearing on behalf of the plaintiff.

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(g) Each aspect of a foreclosure, sale or other disposition under this section, including, but not limited to, the costs, attorney fees, method, advertising, time, date, place and terms, shall be commercially reasonable. Costs and reasonable attorneys' fees incurred by the assignee as a result of any foreclosure action or other legal proceeding brought pursuant to this section and directly related to the proceeding shall be taxed in any such proceeding against each person having title to any property subject to the proceedings. Such costs and fees may be collected by the assignee at any time after demand for payment has been made by the assignee.

| This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following |                             |         |
|---|-----------------------------|---------|
| sections:   |                             |         |
|   |                             |         |
| Section 1   | <i>October 1, 2022, and</i> | 7-254   |
|   | applicable to actions filed |         |
|   | on or after October 1, 2022 |         |
| Sec. 2  | <i>October 1, 2022, and</i> | 7-258   |
|   | applicable to actions filed |         |
|   | on or after October 1, 2022 |         |
| Sec. 3  | October 1, 2022, and        | 22a-506 |
|   | applicable to actions filed |         |
|   | on or after October 1, 2022 |         |
| Sec. 4  | October 1, 2022, and        | 49-92o  |
|   | applicable to actions filed |         |
|   | on or after October 1, 2022 |         |

## Statement of Purpose:

To prohibit foreclosure, assignment and other enforcement actions for unpaid sewer assessment and other fees and charges in the case of owner-occupied real property for which the principal of such unpaid assessments, fees and charges is less than ten thousand dollars.

[Proposed deletions are enclosed in brackets. Proposed additions are indicated by underline, except that when the entire text of a bill or resolution or a section of a bill or resolution is new, it is not underlined.]

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